

**California  
Department of Food and Agriculture  
Farm Bill  
Listening Session**

***“All Farm Bill Titles – Grand Finale”***

**CDFA Auditorium  
Sacramento, California**

***Presented by***

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Good Afternoon. Thank you for this opportunity to present the California Poultry Federation's (CPF) views on a United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) agency that has helped our industry tremendously over the past few years. As we discuss the reauthorization of the farm bill today, we would like you to know that these comments come in addition to others that we have presented at a previous hearing in March. Today's efforts by the California Department of Agriculture, allowing us to reach out and present our views to you means a lot to our producers, processors and growers.

My name is Bill Mattos and I am the president of the California Poultry Federation, which is the organization representing poultry and poultry products in California, including chicken, turkey, duck, game bird, squab and other meat birds.

This afternoon I would like to address this group on the USDA's Rural Development program.

California's position as a Pacific Rim and South American Trading partner, combined with the State's large, diverse and mobile ethnic population, and the Pacific flyway compound the risk of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) or exotic Newcastle Disease (END) being introduced into large populations of broilers, layers, turkeys and specialty poultry species in this state. Southern California experienced a deadly outbreak of END in 2002, and we are all hearing a lot about the present Bird Flu epidemic in Asia, and its spread into Europe and Africa. California poultry producers, private practice veterinarians and university faculty have joined efforts with Federal and State officials to reduce the risk of introduction of HPAI or END, and establish strategies for detection and response to these diseases should they evade disease barriers. The approach to protect California's poultry is multi-faceted. Disease surveillance plays a major role along with bio-security, risk communication and education, and market protection.

The CPF has used its matching grants from the USDA Rural Development program to provide smaller producers opportunities to increase biosecurity and disease prevention on their farms. The USDA rural Development program has helped the California industry to reach out to its smaller producers providing education, training, and development on disease prevention. This outreach program, including biosecurity summits, educational materials, signage, and large and small group specialized curriculum, has successfully served multiple ethnic groups as we have been able to provide training and materials in diverse languages and formats.

The CPF and its members have worked closely with the USDA and the California Department of Food and Agriculture in developing and implementing training and surveillance programs for live bird markets in both urban and rural communities, which includes extensive statewide farm and processing plant testing. Continuation of such outreach programs is critical.

The CPF is hopeful that the CDFA will recognize and fully support the Rural Development Title of the 2007 Farm Bill. The Rural Development Title often gets lost during the farm policy discussions, despite the fact that the USDA rural Development loans, grants, and technical assistance are percolating just below the surface of just about every farm and ranch community in California.

Since 1997, USDA Rural Development California has invested nearly \$3 billion in our state's rural economies in the form of loans, grants, technical assistance for affordable housing, critical infrastructure, community facilities, outreach to rural businesses and cooperatives, and aid to local government.

In 2005, USDA Rural Development contributed the following to rural communities:

- \$120 million to assist rural California families move into their own home or improve their current home.
- \$50 million to provide affordable rental and farm worker housing.
- \$112 million to build infrastructure, and community facilities such as schools, hospitals, libraries, and childcare centers.
- \$61 million to assist rural entrepreneurs start and grow their businesses.

Despite the fact that many of these programs are not intended to directly assist farmers and ranchers, they are direct beneficiaries of community development efforts. According to USDA Undersecretary for Rural Development Thomas Door, as a national average, 96 percent of the total rural income in America – and about 90 percent of farm family income – is from non-farm sources.

As the recent MAAPP Report, issued by the American Farm Bureau Federation, put it: today, *“farmers are more dependent on rural communities than rural communities are dependent on farmers.”*

What that means as a practical matter is that keeping the family farm in business often depends on the availability of good jobs and affordable homes in town, and the quality of farm life can depend on the availability of quality health care, good schools, rural water systems, and effective first responder agencies.

This is why, in addition to Rural Development's direct support for small farmers and producers, it makes it imperative that everyone with an interest in the future competitiveness of U.S. agriculture, as well as those in rural America with no tie to the agriculture sector, support a strong Rural Development Title in the 2007 Farm Bill.